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Howard Hughes — CIA couldn't help Texas find tycoon's last known address.

CIA had little on Hughes

Documents lack tycoon's address

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The Central Intelligence Agency keeps track of many topics. But two things it didn't monitor, recently released agency documents say, were the home address and mental stability of Howard R. Hughes Jr., the reclusive, Texas-born tycoon.

The state Attorney General's Office in 1976 asked then-CIA director George Bush — himself a Texan — for help in determining the domicile and "mental competence" of Hughes. The eccentric movie producer, aviator and businessman died April 5, 1976, at age 70 of kidney failure while flying from Acapulco, Mexico, to Houston for emergency medical treatment.

Texas was trying to claim Hughes as a resident so the state could tax his estate. California was trying to do the same thing, while Hughes heirs insisted he was a resident of Nevada, which has no estate tax.

According to documents obtained by the Dallas Times Herald under the federal Freedom of Information Act, then-Texas Assistant Attorney General Bert W. Pluymen made the request of Bush on October 18, 1976. Bush — who is now vice president — "promised to do what he could on this," CIA associate general counsel Richard H. Lansdale wrote the next day in an internal memo addressed only to "Director of Security."

"I told Mr. Pluymen that I doubted we would have much, if anything, of any significance on these questions and we, of course, might not be able to furnish any information we do discover," Lansdale said.

On December 10, 1976, Lansdale wrote Pluymen that "upon review of the relevant CIA records," the agency had "no information" of any use.

There the matter remained until June 13, 1983, when a legal assistant for the attorney general's office, Brian J. We-

-ber, wrote the CIA with a formal request under the Freedom of Information Act for "Mr. Hughes' contact with the CIA throughout his lifetime," particularly "any document showing an address or residence." On Aug. 26, 1983, the CIA said it would process the request.

That was the last response from the CIA. Texas Assistant Attorney General Jack Schiltz, who supervised the Hughes estate litigation, said recently the CIA never an-

swered the request or provided any information.

A native of Houston,⁴ Hughes moved to California in 1926 at age 20 and never returned to Texas except for a single two-day visit. In the last two decades of his life he led a secretive existence in a string of hotel rooms primarily in California and Nevada.

In an apparent effort to avoid high California taxes, Hughes had sometimes said in sworn statements he was a Texas resident. His death left behind an estate now estimated at \$500 million to \$1 billion, no close relatives and no verifiable will.

After an eight-year legal battle that generated 40 wills judged fraudulent, scores of people whose claims of kinship were dismissed and three appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court, Texas and California settled the litigation in August 1984 through an agreement with the Hughes estate. Under the settlement, Texas got \$50 million in two cash payments and California got between \$119 million and \$150 million in cash and land.